

# THE GULL

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON SOCIETY // VOL. 107 NO. 2 SPRING 2023



## WELCOMING ALL TO AUDUBON

BY AMY CHONG

**G**olden Gate Audubon Society (GGAS) has a strategic goal for the next three years to become more diverse, inclusive, and equitable. We aim for the organization's people to increasingly reflect the racial, cultural, and economic diversity of the region. As Executive Director Glenn Phillips explains, "Golden Gate Audubon is a conservation organization. We achieve conservation by working as a community and being as inclusive as we can be."

CONTINUED on page 3



American Avocet and Black-necked Stilt.  
Alan Krakauer





New Golden Gate Audubon office at David Brower Center.

David Brower Center

## GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON ON THE MOVE

BY GLENN PHILLIPS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**F**or almost 33 years, Golden Gate Audubon has kept an office on San Pablo Avenue in Berkeley. In March, Golden Gate Audubon moved to one of Berkeley's most sustainable buildings: The David Brower Center. Located on Allston Street, one block from the downtown Berkeley BART station, our new office space features two private meeting rooms and ample space for staff and volunteers to work in a bright and welcoming environment.

The David Brower Center was Berke-

ley's first construction project with a LEED platinum certification, the highest level of certification from the US Green Building Council. The building is constructed with; 100 percent daylighting of all office areas, natural ventilation, a high-performance building skin, and a high-efficiency HVAC system that includes in-slab radiant heating and cooling. The ventilation system is controlled by CO<sub>2</sub> monitors, allowing the building to consistently have fresh air without over-ventilating (and wasting energy) when there are few occupants.

This new location allows Golden Gate Audubon to reduce our environmental footprint from both our building and our transportation, as the location makes it easier for staff and visitors to use public transportation. At this location, staff vehicle miles traveled just for commuting should decrease by over 60%, plus more as visitors and guests choose public transit over private vehicles.

Golden Gate Audubon has held several events at the Brower Center, including our first in-person meeting since the pandemic and a large portion of our annual Berkeley Bird Festival. The Center's Goldman Theater allows us to have people attend events both in-person and online. Our next hybrid speaker series event will be on April 20. If you're joining us in person, come by early to visit our office for some light refreshments.

At our old address, we shared the building with offices of the Sierra Club, so it is fitting that our new building is named for the Sierra Club's first executive director, David Brower. David Brower went on to found Friends of the Earth (which founded the League of Conservation Voters) and the Earth Island Institute, an incubator for small environmental non-profits.

The David Brower Center is home to 25 other environmental and social-justice nonprofits, including Friends of the Earth, Earth Island Institute, SAGE (Sustainable Agriculture Education), and the Student Conservation Association. We are thrilled to be joining this vibrant community and look forward to seeing you all at our new home: 2150 Allston Way, Suite 210, Berkeley.

### NEWS BRIEFS

#### New Golden Gate Audubon Office

On April 20, from 5-6:45pm we invite you to check out our new space at 2150 Allston Way, Suite 210, Berkeley (David Brower Center) before the start of our Monthly Speaker event. Interested in being an office volunteer? Contact Whitney Grover at [wgrover@goldengateaudubon.org](mailto:wgrover@goldengateaudubon.org).

#### Osprey Season Begins

On March 1, local Osprey Rosie touched down at the nest site on the historic Whirley Crane in Richmond, shortly after the Richmond Shoreline cleanup by Golden Gate Audubon and other conservation group volunteers. Recently Rosie and Richmond have been seen starting to build a new nest slightly higher up the crane

#### Birding Trips in Spanish

On March 25, we had the opportunity to partner with Latino Outdoors on a bilingual Spanish-English birding field trip. We are also working with our Birding For Everyone scholarship cohort to hopefully offer similar programming in the future.

#### Birdathon Awards Celebration Sunday, May 21

The Birdathon Awards Celebration is back in person after three years of being on Zoom! You can register as early as April 21 for free tickets, just know that space is limited. We can't wait to honor all the organizers, trip leaders, fundraisers and supporters who made this year a success!



**WELCOMING** from page 1

Currently, we don't see all communities represented at GGAS. Last year, we conducted the first baseline demographic survey, a study that will continue through 2023. According to the survey, 87% of our board members are white, 56% are 60 and older, and 78% are heterosexual. A preliminary sample of GGAS field trip leaders, adult education instructors, and committee members shows 93% white participants, 68% age 60 and older, and 82% heterosexual. This is compared to data from the 2020 U.S. Census Bureau showing a racial demographic of 51% white in San Francisco County and 48% white in Alameda County.

The only way to chart a sustainable future for birds and conservation is to include everyone. How do we achieve this goal? Below is a snapshot of what we've been working on.

This year we welcomed our first cohort for the Birding for Everyone Scholarship, a program focused on developing and empowering the next generation of diverse conservation leaders. Out of 28 applications, 78% were Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, 53% identified as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer (LGBTQ), and 50% had financial need. We selected 10 students to receive free Adult Education classes for a year, monthly outings and mentorship, and opportunities to grow into leaders within Audubon. Keep a look out for an upcoming bilingual Spanish-English bird trip led by some of our students.



Birding For Everyone Scholarship recipients birding together.

Análucia Hawkins



Ryan Nakano

Youth Education Director Clay Anderson works with a group of Esperanza Elementary School students at MLK Jr. Regional Shoreline.

## *The only way to chart a sustainable future for birds and conservation is to include everyone.*

Youth Education Manager Clay Anderson teaches students from low-income neighborhoods about the magic of nature by providing experiential learning opportunities in the EcoEd program. "The parks are right there in their neighborhoods," Clay explained. "They just need the opportunity." In fall 2022 the program reached 123 students, including approximately 90 students of color. We expect to engage the same amount in Spring 2023 and hope to reach even more next school year.

While outreach is important, creating a safe and welcoming environment is equally vital. According to Deputy Director Whitney Grover, "there is demand for field trips that are really dedicated to being safe and inclusive spaces." In 2019, Whitney co-founded the Feminist Bird Club with three other women to work towards "promoting diversity in birding and providing safe opportunities to connect with the natural world". The club had a huge amount of interest, especially from women under 50 years old. Every event had a waitlist. Although the club sadly fizzled during the pandemic, it clearly showed a strong demand for inclusive birding spaces.

What does it mean to be welcoming to all? Volunteer Rachel Katz models inclusive practices on their regular birding trips. Rachel takes time to ask for people's pronouns, makes a cultural connection to the land by sharing indigenous history, and encourages people of color and queer folks to share their knowledge with the group. Rachel has received positive feedback that these approaches and more help under-represented birders feel included.

Golden Gate Audubon welcomes all participants, and is looking to intentionally welcome those who haven't felt included in the past. This is challenging, ongoing work that everyone can support—through individual learning, financial support, and volunteering. Below are a few ideas on how to get involved:

- Donate to support EcoEd transportation to introduce more kids to nature.
- Be extra friendly and welcoming at GGAS events. Make no assumptions based on someone's appearance.
- Volunteer on the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee. Contact Amy Chong at [achong@goldengateaudubon.org](mailto:achong@goldengateaudubon.org)



# BIRDING WITH DISABILITIES

BY CHRIS OKON

**Y**ou're going birding. You choose a location, find out where it is and how to get there. Perhaps you ask a friend to join you or you join a group. You grab your binoculars, scope or camera and head to see the Northern Parula or Surf Scoter.

For many birders, it's a simple series of decisions, but for others with additional challenges such as limited mobility or "invisible disabilities" like arthritis or chronic fatigue, choosing to go birding comes with its own set of considerations. Trip information such as terrain, distance, and duration may greatly determine participation, as well as knowing whether there is parking, restrooms, or benches. At the same time, joining a group of nondisabled birders may cause birders with disabilities to worry whether their pace will slow the rest of the group down or whether they will be welcome and respected.

Birders with disabilities have a different set of cards to deal with than nondisabled birders. It is almost impossible to focus binoculars while leaning on a cane. A wheelchair can't move in sand or heavy gravel. It may be hard to grasp or maneuver a scope. Transportation may be a challenge. Yet despite obstacles, the love of birding stays strong.

Many birders have learned to work with their disability and still enjoy birding but for many there is a learning process, a transition phase.

"What I miss most is the camaraderie of the shared experience combined with the guidance of a skilled leader," Golden Gate



Chris Okon

Birders checking out Lake Merritt during the Golden Gate Audubon and Bay Area Outreach and Recreation Program (BORP) bird outing.

Audubon member Claire Magowan says. "I can bird by myself but it's so much fun to be in a group." Magowan, who uses a wheelchair, appreciates trip leaders who "speak to the group and not just the bird" and who are clear in their explanations.

Like Magowan, birder Russ Fernald would "love to be able to talk about birds after an event" and misses group interaction that has been made more challenging by a stroke. He suggests that Golden Gate Audubon widen its offering of trips to include "slow birding" outings which focus on mindful experience of birds and their environment rather than racing to count as many birds as possible. Of course, this experience of group interaction is only as enjoyable and inclusive as other birders in the group make it.

Sometimes nondisabled people can feel uncomfortable around people with disabilities and may not know what to say. "Use common sense interaction," says Bonnie Lewkowicz of Bay Area Outreach and Recreation Program (BORP). "Simply begin by saying 'Hello!' and don't make assumptions about what people can or can't do based on their disability."

Golden Gate Audubon welcomes all birders and their suggestions to enrich the birding experience for everyone. Although not every birding trip may be suitable for people with accessibility challenges, the organization is taking action to clarify trip descriptions and encourage direct communication with trip leaders so people can decide for themselves.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Earth Day Events

Join us in celebrating Earth Day on Saturday April 22 (Taking Action for Wildlife) and Saturday April 29 (Planting for Pollinators) from 10am-4pm at the Oakland Zoo. We'll also be tabling at the Berkeley Bay Festival for another Earth Day event on that same Saturday April 22 from 11am-4pm.

### Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour

The 19th Annual Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour and Green Home Features Showcase kicks off on Saturday April 15 and Sunday April 16 and will continue in-person on the weekend of May 6-7. [www.bringingbackthenatives.net](http://www.bringingbackthenatives.net). We are proud to be partnering with Kathy Kramer again for this great event.

### Birdathon 2023 Auction

From Sunday, May 7 - Sunday, May 21, we will be auctioning off wonderful nature experiences including; overnight stays in Santa Cruz and Mendocino, Kayaking in Monterey Bay, and an afternoon viewing of the Sandhill Cranes. Check [goldengateaudubon.org/birdathon](http://goldengateaudubon.org/birdathon) for a live link to the auction in May.





Trail in Marin Headlands.

Blair Morris/Unsplash

## CLIMATE CHANGE, SF BAY BIRDS, & REAL SOLUTIONS

JUAN PABLO GALVÁN MARTÍNEZ

You’ve probably heard about climate change, but do you know how it will impact Bay Area birds? Do you want to learn real solutions that can actually solve, and avoid, climate catastrophe? Juan Pablo Galván Martínez will answer all these questions and more during this important conversation.

Juan Pablo Galván Martínez is the Senior Land Use Manager of Save Mount Diablo, and the Conservation Chair of Mount Diablo Audubon Society. Martinez graduated from UC San Diego with a BS in Ecology, Behavior and Evolution and received an MS in Sustainable Development and Conservation Biology from the University of Maryland College Park.

Zoom links and passcodes for upcoming presentations are available on our Speaker Series website at [goldengateaudubon.org/education/speaker-series](http://goldengateaudubon.org/education/speaker-series).

## THE INVASIVE SPARTINA PROJECT

LINDSAY DOMECUS AND TOBIAS ROHMER

Since 2005, the Coastal Conservancy’s Invasive Spartina Project has used airboats, genetic testing, and sophisticated GIS to push back invasive plants threatening habitat for shorebirds, waterfowl, and the endangered salt marsh harvest mouse. Learn how hometown heroes are addressing the global biodiversity crisis.

Tobias Rohmer, Monitoring Program Manager for the SF Estuary Invasive Spartina Project, works for Olofson Environmental, Inc. His UC Davis Master’s thesis on California Ridgway’s Rails included substantial field work and monitoring in SF Bay marshes.

Lindsay Faye Domecus, Environmental Biologist at Olofson Environmental Inc, works extensively in the San Francisco Estuary tidal marshes, mapping native and invasive plants, planning and managing marsh revegetation projects, conducting California Ridgway’s Rail breeding season surveys, and overseeing invasive Spartina treatment.



Mudflats at sunset.

Lindsay Domecus

HYBRID

Thursday, May 18  
7 p.m. program  
Zoom

## AUDUBON CONSERVATION RANCHING

PELAYO ALVAERZ AND MATT ALLSHOUSE

Audubon’s Conservation Ranching program (ACR) is designed to protect and improve rangelands by partnering with ranchers to transition to more regenerative grazing approaches via a ranch certification program. This presentation will highlight program practices, early results, and opportunities for engagement.

Matt Allshouse came to Audubon California from Wyoming and has been the Conservation Ranching Program Manager for the state since September 2019. As a rangeland ecologist, he has 15 years of experience associated with land policy, management, and science.

Pelayo Alvarez works as the Director of the Conservation Ranching Program in California. Before joining Audubon Pelayo worked for the Carbon Cycle Institute where he helped establish carbon farming programs across California.



Rotational grazing, tumbling hotwire fence.

Matt Allshouse

ZOOM

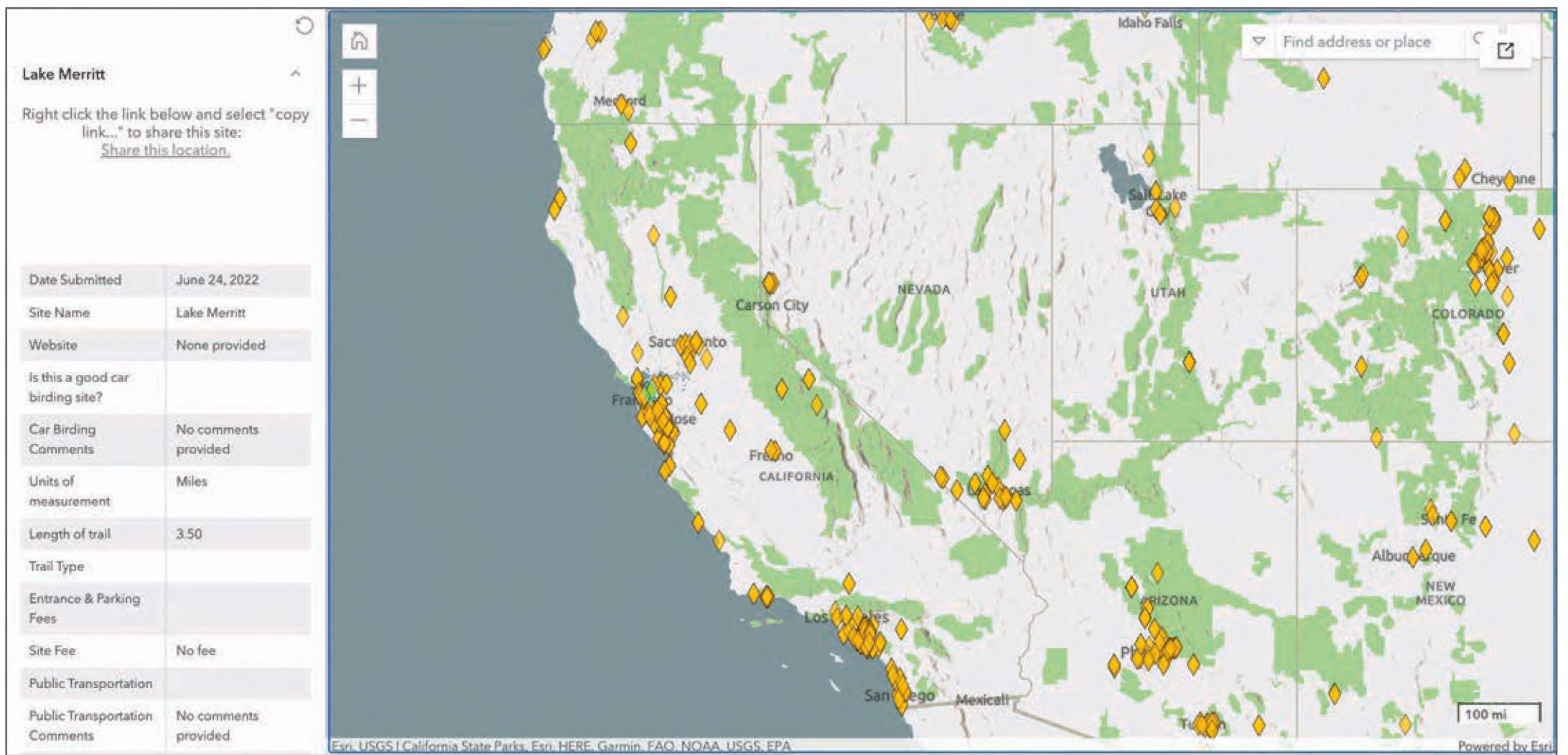
Thursday, June 15  
7 p.m. program  
Zoom and In-person at Goldman Theater (David Brower Center)

ZOOM

Thursday, April 20  
7 p.m. program  
Zoom and in-person at Goldman Theater (David Brower Center)



## FEATURES



The Lake Merritt Birdability Site review on the Birdability Map.

# BIRDABILITY MAP

BY RYAN NAKANO

**I**n almost every issue of *The Gull*, we try to highlight a local Bay Area birding hotspot as a way to connect readers to some of our favorite places as birders. Typically, we ask one of our members to contribute content for this particular section, hoping to cover a wide variety of destinations.

From San Francisco patches like the Presidio, Heron's Head and Land's End, to East Bay favorites including Middle Harbor Shoreline, Point Isabel and Mitchell Canyon, our list of Birding Sites on our website continues to grow and grow with numerous write ups detailing the kinds of birds one is likely to see, the historical context of the area, and what makes each place significant to bird habitat.

For this issue however, I wanted to take the opportunity to introduce or reintroduce a virtual destination in the same kind of detail, that destination being; The Birdability Map.

Created by National Audubon Society in partnership with Birdability, a nonprofit organization dedicated to sharing the joys of birding with people who have disabilities, the crowdsourced map provides users

detailed accounts of accessibility features at birding sites around the world.

Finding your way to [gis.audubon.org/birdability](https://gis.audubon.org/birdability), and a quick scroll down, you'll come to the interactive world map, set on a neutral gray background and speckled in orange diamond-shaped markers. By clicking one of the markers, a sidebar appears showing an individual birding site with a long breakdown of accessibility information.

From transportation logistics, to trail width/grade/surface, down to available on-site services, the information on each birding spot is designed to help birders who experience accessibility challenges make decisions about where to go birding.

The information is derived from the Birdability Site Review, an online form created “in consultation with birders and nature lovers who experience accessibility challenges due to disability or other health concerns”. Because the form is publicly available, anyone can consider adding birding sites to the map by completing a review.

As Golden Gate Audubon continues to work on inclusivity and access in its

programs, we are looking at tools like the Birdability Map to replicate best practices around trip and hotspot descriptions. Often when thinking about what makes a good birding hotspot, we think about the diversity of birds at each site and the site's significance to particular bird habitat. The Birdability Map is not so much a juxtaposition to this definition, but an invitation to consider each site's value from an accessibility standpoint as well, to ensure birding is truly for everyone.

## REMEMBER THE BIRDS, LEAVE A LEGACY

Including Golden Gate Audubon in your estate plan is a generous way to ensure that the Bay Area remains a haven for the birds you love. A bequest can be expressed in a will as simply as, “I bequeath [a sum of money, a percentage of my estate, or an IRA, life insurance policy or investment/bank account] to Golden Gate Audubon Society, 2150 Allston Way, Suite 210, Berkeley, CA 94704.” Consult with your attorney to discuss your particular situation. Learn more at [goldengateaudubon.org/legacy](http://goldengateaudubon.org/legacy).



DONATIONS

Thank you for being a part of our donor and member community.

We are deeply appreciative of every individual, business, and organization that supports Golden Gate Audubon. In this issue, we recognize all of those who donated through our end-of-the-year appeal and all of our major donors from the past year.

Major Donors

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**MISSION STATEMENT**  
Golden Gate Audubon Society engages people to experience the wonder of birds and to translate that wonder into actions which protect native bird populations and their habitats.

**ABOUT GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON SOCIETY**  
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[www.goldengateaudubon.org](http://www.goldengateaudubon.org)

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## 1 DEI Strategy

Golden Gate Audubon sets a strategic goal to become more diverse, equitable and inclusive.

## 2 We've Moved!

After many years at our San Pablo Ave location in Berkeley, we've moved into a new office space.

## 6 Birdability Map

Help ensure birding is truly for everyone by contributing to a crowdsourced map with accessibility features.

## BACKYARD BIRDER



Kenneth Lui

Western Tanager.

## WESTERN TANAGER: SUMMER'S KING

BY ERIC SCHROEDER

Last April I noticed on eBird that my friend Melani was seeing a lot of Western Tanagers in her Point Richmond neighborhood. Since these are a native woodland species (think oak trees, especially), I was intrigued, especially when she directed me to a bottlebrush tree in a yard near the corner of Bishop Avenue and Washington Court. The next morning I found Melani—along with eight Western Tanagers including six males—at the bottlebrush.

The males were in their breeding plumage, characterized by W. L. Dawson in *The Birds of California* as “a costume for a king”—bright red faces standing out from their yellow bodies and black wings and tails. Both males and females sport bold white wingbars—not needed for identification with the males but helpful to distinguish the duller females from other tanagers which lack wingbars.

Birds of the World notes the Western Tanager's favored habitat and its seasonality: “Its broad occurrence in most open coniferous and mixed woodlands of western North America in the summer makes this species a quintessential element of western forests.” While spring encounters like mine in Point Richmond tend to be ephemeral—Western Tanagers stopping for a quick bite—the birds do nest in the Bay Area. Although uncommon in the Berkeley/Oakland hills, they are regular breeders in the oak forests of Mt. Diablo and southeast Alameda County, our closest western woodlands.

Taking their names seriously these birds don't move east of the 104th meridian (imagine a straight line running from mid-North Dakota, down to Houston, Texas.) And, following their eastern boundary, their range extends farther north than that of any other tanager, to a latitude of 60°N—north of Juneau, Alaska. Birds this far north don't linger on their breeding grounds, spending as little as two months there. Most Western Tanagers spend their winters in the highland forests of southern Mexico and Central America, although a few overwinter in coastal California where they can be found in suburbs, parks, gardens, often among exotic flowering trees, like eucalyptus (and bottlebrush!) This is clearly a bird that gets around. It's a pleasure when it graces us with a royal visit.